

1944

27/5/44

CLASS "B."

3

RADIO

B+++
Very good

Class
Margaret
Bryce

as a link between the various Peoples of the

BRITISH EMPIRE

Assistively
written &
well-informed

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Note:-

Two pupils of this age-group attempted essays on this subject.

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the bare fact that for many years the British Broadcasting Corporation has provided programmes for our colonies and Dominions overseas without the beneficiaries incurring any expense therefrom; the B.B.C. deem the advantageousness of such a mutual understanding as far outweighing the additional strain on the purse of the taxpayer at home. To appreciate this further, let us trace briefly the history and growth of our Imperial wireless system.

The first scheme was proposed by the British Marconi Company, who offered to set up stations at various places - the first link in the relay chain was between Leamford, near Oxford, and Cairo - to facilitate Empire communications and harmony. The suggestion was pigeon-holed for five years, when it was made the subject of an Imperial Conference in 1911, which bore fruit in the following year, six stations then being set up for official use in various parts of the Empire.

The B. M. C. had given control of their network to the Post Office in 1910, and on November 24, 1919, the Colonial Secretary formed the Imperial Wireless Telegraphic Communications "to prepare a complete scheme of Imperial wireless communications in the light of modern wireless science and Imperial needs". It should be noted, however, that although this move greatly supplemented the 1906 scheme, no civilian programmes were as yet in operation. On November 14th, 1922, the B.B.C. was formed, and the proposals for a British Overseas Service came up for serious consideration. [after 1921, short waves were being much exploited, America being particularly enterprising in this sphere, but Britain was being rapidly left behind, possibly because short waves were unnecessary for the short distances involved in the B.B.C.'s home services, and as yet we had ~~now~~ regular programmes for the Empire]. an obvious difficulty was who should pay for the new services. The colonies were naturally dubious as to whether the new programme would merit the expenses involved,

and the British taxpayer resented a policy whereby his money would be used to pay for the entertainment of his cousins overseas. at one stage it was even suggested that the american system of sponsoring be adopted - an innovation directly controversial to the stated policy of the Corporation.

For a time, therefore, the fate of the new scheme hung in the balance, but at last all the obstacles were happily circumvented, and in 1932, December the 19th, the King addressed his Empire on short wave from Balmoral. Here then is what we have been seeking, an example of the bonds which can be forged to bring closer together the New Zealanders and Indians, South Africans and Canadians, Malayan and Welshmen, to form in effect a Brotherhood of Nations. Surely the very fact of a British monarch addressing all parts of his far-flung domains simultaneously justifies a remark of General Smuts, made at the time of the initial stages of the scheme for an Imperial wireless system, - "It will draw more closely the Bonds of Empire".

Indeed, that veteran of many campaigns, now a Field-Marshal, has himself had frequent occasion to "broadcast" (literally!) his views through a microphone in his own homely and optimistic voice, so that he, like many another statesman and otherwise prominent public figure, has well-nigh become a personal friend to millions of listeners who would have had no means of hearing him speak but for Radio. When George V died a few years ago many grieved who had been totally indifferent but for the fact that his broadcast messages had created an impression of profound sincerity through his pleasant voice striking respondent chords in the heart of many a humble subject.

Mention of personal friends brings us easily onto one of the more apparent benefits of radio. Official ^{gains} ~~benefits~~ are in themselves immense, but nowadays the human element in inter-racial harmony is of almost equal importance. British

"And those musicians that shall play to you
Hang in the air a thousand leagues from hence
And straight they shall be here..." - Shakespeare

"Tnk-tonk, kertonk-ertonkee, k'tonk"; - Thus did the African bush-natives signal news from tribe to tribe, with an incredible swiftness surpassing that of any runner. In Tibet, moreover, we are led to believe that the lamas have mastered the science of telepathy, and thus transmit warnings and information. But such speedy methods of communication are not monopolised solely by our less civilised cousins; the White Sahib has developed ~~and~~ even more reliable devices for linking up distant places and events - the powers of Telephone and Wireless. Each of these discoveries has been a potent factor in developing our modern civilisation, and each, appropriately enough, has been closely connected with the British Empire. A Scotsman invented the telephone, and much of the initial research into the possibilities of the Radio telephone was done in Britain.

It is with the Wireless that we are concerned at the moment, as it is only by means of this that millions of people, all over the world, can simultaneously hear, say, the King broadcasting on Empire Day. Our greatest dramatist might have been prophesying when he wrote the above lines, for truly can we now turn a knob, or press a button on the arm of our favourite fireside chair, and voices from all quarters of the globe are at our disposal at a touch of the finger.

But surely Radio means more than mere pleasure; surely the primary advantage to be derived from our wireless set is, without censorship save for atmospheric, to hear opinions expressed from all sections of the world. In particular does Wireless provide a link, a key to understanding, between the many English-speaking peoples of the British Empire, on which "the sun never sets". ample proof of the value of such a unifying medium can be inferred from

evacuees in Canada, and colonial troops in this country, not forgetting the Paiforce and similarly remote stations:— all send messages of comfort and greeting to their dear ones over that unifying link of inestimable importance, Radio.

✓ Nowadays we hear a great deal about wireless as used in Transatlantic broadcasts, taking the major part in promoting anglo-american understanding; but let us never forget the great part which radio has played in linking us to our own great Empire. Twenty years ago, we really knew very little about the Commonwealth of Nations which we built up: we had read books, and seen travel posters, describing life in Australia and Canada, but few of us had ever heard a South African negro choir, or heard first-hand accounts of New Zealand scenery and maoris. How many of us, but for B.B.C. recordings, ~~had~~ ^{would have} ever heard either a tiger snarl in his native forest, or the gay South-Sea Islanders' working-songs illustrating one of those colourful travel features which we are so often privileged to hear? This, then, is the service which wireless supplies to the British Empire, and still the work of uniting our varied peoples continues.

It was Hartwig, Frisch, in a report on Radio to the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation, who asked the rhetorical question, "will not the radio, then have the effect of making the younger generation feel a sense of spiritual fellowship in a quite different way?" No ~~sooner~~ sooner do we flip over the pages of our Radio Times than we see dozens of examples of the way in which the B.B.C. is promoting cultural relationships and harmony. Frisch's "younger generation" now form the backbone of our democracy, and have a profounder sense of their duties to their fellow-men

than any preceding generation. Religious and educational programmes are exerting a great influence upon the average person today, and have done much to keep alive the interest in culture and learning among such people as clergymen and teachers on remote outposts, who would otherwise have been completely cut off from intellectual circles; but possibly the most important result of the B.B.C.'s enlightened policy is the promotion of international, and above all anglo-empire, understanding, stimulating the latent desire in all of us to work as one for the advancement of British Imperial interests both internal and external. This, of course, is particularly true in the present crisis, when any form of radio transmissions is essential for the conveying of both public news and confidential information. News can be relayed over a quarter of the globe in a few seconds, and the same applies to diplomatic messages in cipher. The position of such countries as Australia would have been very insecure indeed but for the guiding influence of the Homeland manifesting itself through the ether. Nor must we forget the message of hope and comfort which the B.B.C. convey to the occupied Channel Islands.

Let us sum up our brief survey of modern uses for this recent invention by quoting the Dean of the University of Cincinnati, who said, "What perhaps appealed to me more than any other phase of the radio telephone is its potent influence in bringing together all the peoples of the world, in cementing human relationship, and doing away with discord and promoting international understanding and harmony."

